

## San Nicolas Island Assignment

Pt. Mugu - 1230

5-8-64

1245 – Here sitting in the parking lot alone I have a little time to relax and bring up to date the notes. Once again I am bound for one of the Channel Islands. Six years ago I hiked the rugged ridges of S.N. carrying the gear of Bob Norris. I gathered data for his geology thesis. It was great then. I found 2 wonderful little Indian mortars and a green colored net weight. Discovered some petroglyphs in a sea cave.

Little did I expect to return to this Navy held island. Something about islands lure me. They cast a magic spell over me as I dream of their coves & quiet waters. Uninhabited beaches & wonderful wreckage and drifts from far away places. Every turn & cove has a secret to be explored.

Originally it was planned that Dave Young & Dr. Folsom would accompany me but the usual snafu occurred and they left the deal to me.

If I can get the study material from the island as well as I did on the Baja Mexico assignment I might be in line for more collecting and even to Midway & Wake.

This oceanic radio-activity tests can lead to a routine collecting series all over the Pacific Ocean for years to come.

1430 – aboard DC3 & airborne for San Nicolas. It seems that the island will be fairly depopulated for the weekend. I talked with some of the fellows that are flying out with me. It is hazy but I recognize Anacapa off the starboard. 35 minutes for the flight. The island looked small after being associated with San Clemente.

At the Air Terminal I signed in and a fellow passenger gave me a lift to the B.O.Q. After a little confusion I located the linen & bunk issuer, a colored fellow named Allison. I get lodging free but pay for meals.

My room was a fine one with only 2 beds and no companion. Good cabinets & desk. They issue a key and I felt quite comfortable.

Across the hall are two other civilians and we have been together a great deal.

I checked in with a Lt. Shaffer and he gave me the Chief's jeep and permission to tour the island with only one restriction.

So far the first day I've done OK I believe. After chow I took the jeep & my 2 companions Harry & Lou and we drove to the island's West end. It was late but I found several pieces of Indian fish hooks & one bone awl.

Mussel signs were poor in the middens but maybe they will be better tomorrow.

What a thrill to have transportation and be roaming about my island.

Also a nice surprise was the finding of my note from Sibyl when I went to brush my teeth. She is worth all my troubles and I love her. I know we must go to San Miguel now. The old lust was there this afternoon when I found the fish hooks.

I am sitting in my bunk writing this all alone. In all the bunk house there are only these two rooms occupied.

5/9/64 – Sat.

San Nicolas Is.

Right now its midnite & I've just completed preparing 100 mussel meats for the isotope lab. Too tired to write but what a day –

2 pestles – 2409

fish hooks

awls & misc.

Jeep tour!

Pheasants

Elephant Seals

Harbor Seals

G.B. Heron

No lunch – fun

A Great day

Later = On Saturday I scouted the perimeter of the island. First of all I drove the jeep down to the beach on the northeast end of the island about where I circled the chart star. I had to wait until the fuel depot opened before I could fuel up. So I was using my time to search middens of course. With the jeep tucked away in a dune I headed over toward a big sand dune midden. In one little blow out area I crawled about searching for fish hooks when I saw a piece of stone barely showing. I dug it out & found nice whole pestle (2409) as perfect as the original but all the other excavating brought nothing.

By this time it was time to fuel so back to the top-side I drove feeling highly exhilarated with my good luck. On the way I saw a cock pheasant & learned later that they were planted here successfully.

All day long I poked my way around the island stopping to search middens & check the coast for possible mussel collecting areas.

Dropped down from the B.O.Q. to the shore. I began the coastal drive a few miles north of the sandspit. From there and across the spit the road was graded & good. Lt. Shafer had warned me of a contaminated area here due to a rocket engine burn up accident. Apparently barium ash could contaminate the air & dust one breathes. I was told later the area was safe now but they leave the scare on. An attempt is being made to build a breakwater near the spit on the north side but little success is being found.

On around the southside to Dutch Harbor. At times I had to stop and walk ahead to check the road since it had washed or blown away. On two occasions I drove on the beach to by pass some particular difficult areas.

It was thrilling to be all alone on an island with a vehicle & permission to roam. It being the week-end I encountered no one except a couple of sailors going fishing.

Lunch time came & found me miles from the B.O.Q. and I wouldn't have given up a precious minute of my joyous adventure.

There were my old friends the elephant seals and thousands of sea lions. Big male sea lions were dominating their harems. A great Blue Heron flapped off and one lone mallard duck flew up from a tiny pond.

I continued on around the island until I came to a major canyon about 2 miles past Dutch Harbor. At this point the road became real messy and being all alone I thought it inadvisable to press my luck too far. A newer trail climbed up the east side of the canyon & eventually came out on top behind bldg. 148. It was 4 wheel drive all the way for the little jeep and I was very favorably impressed with the vehicle.

The Lt. Shafer had given me the Chief's personal jeep and it was in good shape.

From topside I took the black-top on out to the West side and hit the coast again approximately 4 miles farther west than where I had pulled out previously.

From here the road follows the shore closely and goes by a rock crusher where they make material for the roads.

At the Northwest end I climbed over the dunes and the road became dubious at many places but always I managed to manipulate thru somehow. My greatest fear was going down a too steep dune and then being unable to climb back out if I later found myself trapped. This can occur especially if you tear the crust up going down.

Shortly after rounding the island and starting down the north side I came upon a big 4 engine bomber, a tank, a truck and a smaller fighter plane all sitting in the dune area. The plane I believe was an old PB4Y2 made into a drone.

I was told that this plane was flown in there but it's unbelievable to me. The wheels are all in tack w/tires etc. Landing gear good. No torn sections about. Yet this plane would have needed to slide across numerous gullies deep enough to have demolished it. The engines were removed & bullet holes riddled the fuselage. I am still curious to learn the exact way that plane came to be there in the condition it is. [Learned that it was towed & placed in that spot]. Not far from here there is a small aircraft carrier on the rocks. I heard that it had been anchored off shore and broken away in a storm. Anyway there it sits, a rusty derelict forlorn and rusting away. From this location on the road becomes increasingly worse until one reaches the fenced in

restricted bldg. near Sheep Landing. Then it is blacktop and connects up with where I had originally started.

I didn't return back to B.O.Q. until after dark and a cold moist wind made life dismal. Too late for chow at the regular mess but I walked over to the beer palace & my new friend Red Mason fixed me up with a hot dog sandwich & chilli beans. Tasted good and I was weary but content again.

Sun 5/10/64

San Nicolas Is.

Rose early this morning & found a sunny day awaiting. Breakfast in the mess was the usual mess. Greasy sausage, cold fried potatoes, leather pancakes & gooey sweet cakes.

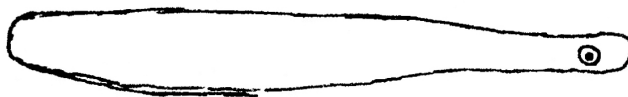
Once again I fueled up my jeep and my friend Glen Thorn waved me off. Today I drove to the rock crusher site & turned back along the coast toward Dutch Harbor. I wanted to hike the area between where I'd been unable to drive.

Soon I faced a big soft sand dune with a very steep slope. I probably could have risked the chance and passed thru but alone this way I faced the chance of being stuck and a long useless walk for help. Of equal importance would be my loss of time to explore and search the middens.

The hike along the coast took me thru many middens and I could only spot check occasionally if I wanted to make any distance.

In one dune I kneeled to rest and search. Soon I had picked up several nice disc beads and my day was a happy one for me. Down below me on the coastal rocks I believe was the ledge where I discovered the petroglyphs on the previous trip and later published thru the Santa Barbara Museum. This time I didn't waste time in re-checking them but continued on down the coast toward Dutch Harbor.

Weary and tired at about 1:00 pm I decided to rest by a dune overlooking the Elephant Seal beach. I was walking along on the old jeep trail thru the dunes & spotted a nice abalone shell fish hook (1512). With more searching in the dune I jumped with delight when I made my best find of the trip. There completely exposed and waiting just for me was a beautiful stone pendant.



#3323-3432

It was nicely drilled from both sides & perfectly preserved. It was my greatest thrill.

I spent the rest of the day scouting the dunes and worked back around the island to the area where the bomber was. Several nice fish hooks were added with two being beautiful. One was a rather large one and well preserved. On the dune near the plane I stopped and found a

hollow bone awl (#2295) & with carved rings encircling the piece. At first I thought it was a piece of lobster antenna.

The wind and sand reflection after the hours of exposure drove me to the bunk house and a shower before dark. It had been one of the most enjoyable days and I know Sibyl would enjoy seeing the artifacts.

Mon -- 5-11-64

Fog held up the Mugu plane until about 11:00 a.m. so I didn't get started homeward until afternoon.

The drive down the Ventura freeway and thru L.A. was a hot dry one. Smog filled the air and I detested it.

In Laguna I found Sibyl & the folks waiting to eat late lunch with me. We had a good evening and everyone seemed to be pleased with my relics. We stayed over night and drove to San Diego early the next morning.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to be on San Nicolas once again. Each time I think it will be my last.